

REMARKS

I. Status of the Application

Claims 15-35 are pending in this application. In the October 2, 2007 office action, the Examiner:

- A. Rejected claims 15, 19, 20 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Japanese Patent Publication JP 06-053800 to Hirano Yoji (hereinafter “Hirano Yoji”);
- B. Rejected claims 18, 21-23 and 25-34 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirano Yoji in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,045,733 to Sendelweck, U.S. Patent No. 5,438,286 to Pavlin et al., U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0089980 to Herfurth et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,667,514 to Ahlers et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,444,504 to Zivic and U.S. Patent No. 6,855,981 to Kuma; and
- C. Deemed claim 35 allowable if rewritten in independent format including all of the limitations of its base claim and any intervening claims.

The indication of allowable subject matter is gratefully acknowledged. In this response, applicants have amended claims 15, 24 and 30 and cancelled claim 35. It is respectfully submitted that all of the pending claims include subject matter deemed by the Examiner to be patentable. Accordingly, advancement of the case to allowance is earnestly solicited.

II. Claims 15-23 are in a Condition for Allowance

Claim 15 has been amended to incorporate all of the limitations of previously presented claim 35. Thus, claim 15 now represents claim 35 rewritten in independent form. Because claim 35 has been deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form, it is respectfully submitted that

claim 15, as amended, is allowable over the prior art. For at least this reason, it is respectfully submitted that claim 15 is in condition for allowance.

Claims 16-22 depend from claim 15 and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons.

III. Claims 24-29 are in a Condition for Allowance

Claim 24 has been amended to incorporate all of the limitations of previously presented claims 35. Claim 24, as amended, includes each and every limitation of claim 15 as amended herein. Accordingly, for at least the same reasons as those set forth above in connection with claim 15, it is respectfully submitted that claim 24 is in condition for allowance.

Claims 25-29 depend from claim 24 and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons.

IV. Claims 30-34 are in a Condition for Allowance

Claim 30 has been amended to incorporate all of the limitations of previously presented claims 35. Claim 30, as amended, includes each and every limitation of claim 15 as amended herein. Accordingly, for at least the same reasons as those set forth above in connection with claim 15, it is respectfully submitted that claim 30 is in condition for allowance.

Claims 31-34 depend from claim 30 and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons.

V. Conclusion

For all of the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted the applicant has made a patentable contribution to the art. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application is therefore respectfully requested.

In the event applicant has inadvertently overlooked the need for an extension of time or payment of an additional fee, the applicant conditionally petitions therefore, and authorizes any fee deficiency to be charged to deposit account 13-0014.

Respectfully submitted,



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